NRIPENDRANATH'S LA SOCIÉTÉ DES PARESSEUX - A THEATRE SAGA FROM CHANDANNAGAR

La Société des Paresseux was a Bengali theatre group that existed in the first half of the 20th century (1930-1960 approx.). It was founded by Shri Nripendranath Gangopadhyay (1905-1966) . The office of La Société des Paresseux was situated in the locality of Fatakgora, in the then French colony of Chandannagar, in West Bengal (India).

Nripendranath Gangopadhyay was born in the year 1905. A brilliant student that he was, Nripendranath did his first play Abhishap, written by Deshashree Harihar Shett, when he was 16 years old. Two years later, in order to win bread for his younger siblings, Nripendranath took up a job in the Indian Railways.

Nripendranath directed many plays. He was a renowned stage actor of his times. Natyacharya Shri Shishir Bhaduri appreciated Nripendranath's performance in the play Seeta. The King of Burdwan also awarded a gold medal to Nripendranath for his acting.

The group used to stage historical plays primarily. Some of those plays were Alamgir, Kedar Rai, Seeta, Michael et cetera. The plays were mostly staged in Nritya Gopal Smriti Mandir (The Chandannagar Library) in Chandannagar.

Nripendranath Gangopadhyay along with his younger brother Shri Harendranath Gangopadhyay, Shri Moloy Mukherjee and other members of his family, friends and students directed and performed some of the most important works of the time.

Later, the eldest son of Nripendranath Gangopadhyay, Kalidas, who would go on to become a noted actor of the Bengali stage, also joined La Société des Paresseux and under the direction of his uncle Shri Harendranath Gangopadhyay, gave his first major stage performance as Lord Carvalho in the play Kedar Rai. Kalidas has also acted in two films : Rater Rajanigandha and Epaar Opaar.

Many stalwarts of the Bengali stage and screen joined and performed for La Société des Paresseux. The great actress Geeta Dey was one such stalwart who acted in quite a few plays presented by La Société des Paresseux.

Jeetendranath Bandopadhyay was another distinguished actor who was part of the La Société des Paresseux. Aloka Ganguly, Dipika Das, Panchanan Bhattacharya, Sushilkumar Nag, Durgadas Bandopadhyay, Shri Harendranath Gangopadhyay were some of the actors who performed for La Société des Paresseux.

Nripendranath Gangopadhyay was 25 years old when he founded La Société des Paresseux. He was at the same time an actor, director and teacher of theater. The legacy of Nripendranath continues as contemporary theater groups of Chandannagar and West bengal are still to this day benefiting from the teachings of Natyaguru Nripendranath Gangopadhyay.